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THE CRIMINOLOGY OF BOXING, VIOLENCE AND DESISTANCE

Jump, D, (2020). Bristol University Press. pp221 (hdbk) £57.81. ISBN-10 : 1529203244

Jump's publication *The Criminology of Boxing, Violence and Desistance*, presents a fascinating exploration into the exciting and, at times, contradictory world of pugilism. Employing an immersive ethnographic method, Jump utilises 3 in-depth narrative accounts of professional boxing coaches Frank, Eric, and Leroy. Through these authentic stories it allows the reader to understand how boxing practices, perform and maintain masculinity, including their assumed relationship with violence and desistance. The book provides a critical discourse on the assumptions associated with boxing as 'hook for change' (p.2); seeking to understand this relationship between sport and crime prevention while drawing upon the most recent literature and theoretical frameworks to help explain it. Through Jump's interrogation of the ideas and case studies, many central themes emerge, such as; systemic poverty, the exclusory nature of boxing towards certain groups, lack of opportunities, lack of social mobility, problematic masculinity, and wider notions of social class.

The author begins with a brief history of boxing and its wider role within society and why this environment is a worthy area of study for the social researcher, this effectively sets the scene for its later evaluation. These earlier chapters (1 & 2) also contain a review on the most salient literature on desistance, such as *Martinson* revelations from the 1970s, that very little works in interventions on recidivism – Jump also outlines the links between sport (particularly conflict sports) and negative forms of masculinity, typically referred to as 'hegemonic' after Connell's influential work on domineering/subjugating forms of gender performance. Chapters 3 to 6 then introduces Jump's collected data on 6 months of fieldwork, the bibliographical interviews of three individuals, all deeply entrenched in the boxing world - the stories of Frank, Eric and Leroy. Chapters 7 and 8 illuminate the key findings from these accounts, with the final chapter being directed towards an evaluation of boxing as a means of desistance and the potential future policy changes.

The authors central finding is the revealing appraisal of boxing as an intervention on criminogenic attitudes, by showing an accurate portrayal of the shifting legitimacy of violence. It is both boxing and hypermasculinity laid bare - how it can be effectively utilised as a tool for change, that allows for the construction of the 'new self'. Conversely, outlining what needs to change in order promote inclusivity in the sport and maximise its mechanisms for crime reduction. There are also several key insights in this work. For instance, Jump deconstructs some of the contradictions at the extreme end of masculinity, as a form of dominance and power but conversely, hegemonic masculinity as a barrier, 'maintenance of masculine identities of his nature override men's ability to desist' (p.84). The author shows the intersectionality of gender, and how it is reflected in various ways 'not only does the hegemonic pattern construct differences between men and women but it also seems to construct difference between class, race and status' (p.31). Crucially, the accounts themselves, although tragic at times, provide powerful examples of challenging environments in which these young people operate - Jump manages to dissect their lived experiences with sharp academic insight. From these case studies Jump extends the idea of capital, advancing and operationalising the concept of 'physical capital' whereby men are using and crafting their physical bodies, into a form a currency with many uses such as a denial of victimhood.

In respect to the central claims, the author provides an effectively nuanced argument, noting the positive aspects to pugilism such as providing a fixed secure space, sense of belonging, fraternity and a 'safe' way to express closeness with other men. Nevertheless, acknowledging it's dangers in creating situations of violence outside of that space 'violence became an easily understandable and expected reaction to unfolding events (p.158). One of the central arguments is that there is an implicit assumption of such programmes as both a means of diversion and prevention towards criminality,

whereas this evidence base is lacking. If Jump is correct then this has dramatic implications for future programmes and the considerable investment going into these areas from organisations such as the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF).

In closing, this book provides a fresh viewpoint on desistance from an empowering perspective, providing real insight in an arena fraught with context dependent truths and seeming inconsistencies. Along with increased theoretical understanding, this work also provides many useful recommendations for future social policies around ways to impact recidivism. Such as knowing the limitations of the programmes themselves, ensuring the importance of appropriate positive role models. Jump recognises that to move forward there must be an effort not to recondition harmful aspects to masculinity, instead where 'young men are encouraged to view their masculinity in a more inclusive manner' (p.172). Alternatively, by arguing for a more holistic approach that can provide a therapeutic element and grant what Jump discusses as a '*redemptive script*', with interventions that can provide the cognitive changes necessary to make a real improvement in their criminogenic tendencies, and not just house these young men.

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